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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000059

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019-01-26
TAGS: PGOV PINR SOCI KDEM SO DJ
SUBJECT: Somalia - TFG Parliament Adds Seats for ARS

REF: a) DJIBOUTI 50

CLASSIFIED BY: Bob Patterson, Counselor for Somalia Affairs; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) on
January 26 overwhelmingly agreed to double the number of seats for
parliamentarians, in order to allow Alliance for the Re-liberation
of Somalia (ARS) MPs to formally complete the next step in forming
a unity government. The TFP is scheduled later on January 26 to
extend the transitional government's mandate for two years.
Somalia Unit and other members of the international community
continued to pressure the acting President, Prime Minister, and MPs
to elect a new president by January 28. Meanwhile, the ARS
Chairman Sheikh Sharif told us January 26 that the ARS list of 200
MP-nominees was ready for release, and would be passed soon to the
acting President. The ARS Central Committee on January 25
nominated Sharif as its candidate for president. End summary.

The Vote

¶2. (C) On January 26, the Transitional Federal Parliament voted 211
- 6, with 3 abstentions to increase its size by 275 seats as the
next step in creating a TFG - ARS unity government. (Note: The ARS
will be able to use 200 seats for members of its Central Committee
and its supporters. The remaining 75 seats will be held for
representatives of civil society, the business community, and to
bring in those who have been outside the Djibouti process.) The
vote paves the way for ARS deputies to be sworn in, possibly as
early as January 27. Their entry into Parliament should set the
stage for the election of a unity government president, perhaps by
January 28.

¶3. (C) The overwhelming vote to include the ARS was preceded by
much agonizing on the part of some transitional parliamentarians
and active efforts by others to convince their fellow
parliamentarians and members of the international community that
including the ARS would allow "Islamists" to take control of the
government. They also accused the ARS of not adhering to the 4.5
formula for clan representation.

¶4. (C) Members of the Somalia Unit, others in the international
community, and the UN's Special Representative lobbied hard, in the
days preceding the vote, to counter efforts by the TFG leadership
and many MPs to extend the deadline, established by the
Transitional Federal Charter, for electing a new president in the
event of resignation. (Note: The Charter allots the Parliament
thirty days to elect a new president. Former President Yusuf
resigned on December 29.) In difficult last-minute conversations
the morning of January 26, Parliament Speaker Sheikh Aden "Madobe"
was persuaded to make every effort to ensure that the Parliament
did not extend the deadline.

ARS Preparations

¶5. (C) In a long meeting on January 26, ARS Chairman Sheikh Sharif
and Executive Committee Head Sharif Hassan assured Somalia Unit
that the ARS list of 200 MP-nominees was ready, had been vetted by
all of the respective clans, and conformed with the 4.5 formula.
One hundred of the two hundred prospective deputies were already in
Djibouti, they said and, with UNPOS help, they expected the
remaining nominees to arrive in Djibouti no later than January 28.
The ARS leaders also told us that the ARS Central Committee had
January 25 nominated Sheikh Sharif as their candidate for
president. The ARS leadership agreed after an extended negotiation
with Somalia Unit and the UK Somalia Watcher, that they would not
push for the election of a new Speaker. (Note: SRSG Ould-Abdallah
had guaranteed the current Speaker, "Madobe," that he would do all
possible to protect his position in order to ensure that the
Speaker was ot worried about his own immediate future as he
presided over the smooth election of a new president.)

¶6. (C) Although the Parliament on January 26 did not amend the
Charter to allow additional time for the election of a president,
the ARS continued to insist to us that the elections would lack
legitimacy if they were held just one day after their MPs were to
take the oath of office. They urged that the Djibouti parliamentary
session be extended by several more days, and blamed the lack of
progress in forming a unity government and electing a successor to
President Yusuf on the TFG's failure to convene Parliament until
January 25.

¶7. (C) Although the international community, led by SRSG
Ould-Abdallah, has continues to insist that presidential elections
occur not later than January 28, resistance among MPs and the TFG
leadership remains strong. They note that only two days remain to
transport ARS MP-nominees to Djibouti, swear them in, preview a
large number of presidential candidates, and conduct the

three-round vote. Some deputies seem interested in staying longer
in order to maximize the UN per diem they are collecting while in
Djibouti. Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein "Nur Adde" told us
January 26 that the short deadline was causing him to re-consider
his candidacy but appears to have been talked out of his
pre-election jitters.

Comment

¶8. (C) The progress made in today's session was notable, paving the
way for the ARS to take an active role in the election of a new

president. We will continue to pressure transitional federal
institution members to hold this election by the 30-day, January 28
deadline established by the Charter, but it appears possible, at
this juncture, that the deadline will not be met. A press release
issued by UNPOS following the Parliament's vote, appears to be
preparing the way for that eventuality. It notes that the
President will be sworn in on January 31.
SWAN